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ABSTRACT

A "System for coding Integration and Differentiation messages" in group communication (SID) was developed, based on the theoretical and empirical work of W. C. Schutz, W. Bennis and H. Shepard, and A. Koestler. In SID, integrating messages are defined as those dealing with material internal to the group and having positive affect, or internal with neutral affect and agreement. Differentiating messages are defined as: (1) those concerned with material external to the group and showing positive, negative, or neutral affect; (2) internal messages showing negative affect; and (3) internal messages with neutral affect and disagreement. Messages that are neither integrating nor differentiating are internal, with neutral affect and neutral agreement. SID was used to categorize the communication in two self-analytic groups, each composed of seven college students. The results showed that, in both cases, the groups began with low integration and high differentiation and gradually increased integration behavior and decreased differentiation behavior. (FI)

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A SYSTEM FOR CODING INTEGRATION AND DIFFERENTIATION

MESSAGES (SID): OPERATIONALIZING INCLUSION

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A SYSTEM FOR CODING INTEGRATION AND DIFFERENTIATION
MESSAGES (SID): OPERATIONALIZING INCLUSION¹

People are inherently boundary setting organisms; we set limits on what we can think and feel, on how closely we may approach others, physically and emotionally, and they us. Boundary setting may be conscious or unconscious; and boundaries may be fixed or fluid, implicit or explicit, but are integral parts of the self and especially of relationships. As Lifton (1967) says in his discussion of boundaries,

Boundaries can be viewed as neither permanent nor by definition false, but rather as essential and yet subject to the fundamental forces for change characterizing our age. We require images of limit and restraint, if only to help us grasp what we are transcending [p. xii].

Paradoxically, at the same time we erect barriers to ensure our separateness from others, we need and desire community with others in order to feel loved and to establish and strengthen our sense of self. Cooley (1964) explains this self-other dependency in his concept of the "looking-glass self." Through our perceptions of others' perceptions of us, we come to "know" who we are; we see ourselves as mirrored in the "mind's eye" of the other. By this process we are intangibly linked to the other, and the self-other boundary blurs. Solotaroff (1967) writes, "there is no such thing as even a relatively fixed sense of self, ego or identity--rather, there is only the

subjective mind in motion in relationship to that which it confronts [p. 46]." Much behavior then, involves the re-assertion of boundaries between self and others in order to regulate our integration with, and differentiation from others.

The dual process of asserting our separateness, and of merging with others has been recognized in a variety of contexts. In marriage and family literature it appears as separateness and connectedness (Hess & Handel, 1959); developing a sense of separateness and a sense of belongingness (Minuchin, 1974), and identity and relation (Wynne, Ryckoff, Day & Hirsch, 1958). Bochner (1976) refers to the family members' needs for autonomy and interdependence as the fundamental issue in all families.

In terms of organizational behavior Lawrence and Lorsch (1969) maintain that successful organizations are both well integrated between departments or subsystems, and highly differentiated or specialized within subsystems. In the small group Schutz (1958) suggests that concern over "inclusion" characterizes major stages of group development. The group member is concerned both with maintaining individuality and fitting into the group. Schutz found these same concerns manifested in stages of childhood and adolescent development. Farrell (1976), Hartman and Gibbard (1974), and Kaplan (1967) found that group members were centrally involved with defining and

maintaining both individual and group boundaries. Beisser (1971) explains the individual-group tension as the process of being like and unlike others in order to find oneself in relation to a group.

Koestler (1967, 1972) more globally than others, sees the dynamic expressions of partness and wholeness as tendencies of all living systems, and calls these expressions differentiation and integration. Koestler's terms are used in this paper: differentiation refers to an individual's efforts to assert his/her unique identity and autonomy from the group; integration is an individual's effort to merge with the group, to belong.

Despite wide recognition in the literature of the importance of integration and differentiation, little empirical investigation of these concepts has been undertaken. This is partly a result of the difficulty of operationally defining integration and differentiation. These concepts are complex, multidimensional, and consequently difficult to identify in behavior. Therefore, the objectives of this study are: an operationalization of verbally communicated integration and differentiation, including the creation of a schemata to categorize such behaviors, and a test of the category system on the recorded communication in two self-analytic groups.

CATEGORY SYSTEM

The first objective of this study was satisfied by the development of a System for coding Integration and Differentiation messages (SID). In creating SID integration and differentiation behaviors were first separated into subcategories or dimensions. This process kept the investigation closer to the intended meaning-structures of the concepts than did operationalizing terms more generally, and the amount of inference-making required of coders was minimized.² Behavior categories were avoided that are overly general (e.g., Category x: person attempts to integrate with the group), or so concrete and specific that the system is unwieldy (e.g., Category y: person says, "I like this group.") and requires an enormous number of categories.

Theoretical Basis

Preliminary dimensions of SID are based on the theoretical work of Bennis and Shepard (1956), Schutz (1958), Koestler (1964, 1967, 1972), and the empirical work of . A synthesis of this work emphasizing behaviors identified by the authors as integrating and differentiating follows.

Schutz (1958) views inclusion as one of three

primary interpersonal needs, and relates inclusion to belongingness--the need to establish satisfactory interaction with others. Maximal inclusion is represented by intensive interaction and "oversocial" behavior, while minimal inclusion is represented by withdrawal and detachment--"undersocial" behavior. An ideal degree of inclusion is achieved by the "social" type. He/she has a high sense of self-worth and is comfortable with varying degrees of interpersonal closeness.

While Schutz has placed inclusion needs on a continuum ranging from the needs of oversocial to undersocial personalities, a different continuum is created here. This study is concerned with categorizing inclusion behaviors rather than needs, and the continuum ranges from social behavior or integration at one pole, to autonomy behavior or differentiation at the other pole. The oversocial type might engage in ostentatious bids for attention or recognition. Under this system such behavior could be classified as differentiation if it distinguished the individual from the group.

It must be noted that the poles of the continuum of integration and differentiation do not represent a pure

dichotomy. An individual can rarely be totally integrated with or differentiated from others; rather, the individual expresses "degrees" of community or autonomy. Further, integration and differentiation are interdependent phenomena; differentiation behavior may stimulate more integration and vice versa. Ultimately, the fully functioning group is highly integrated, while members retain a strong sense of self (see, e.g., Hambden-Turner, 1970).

Bennis and Shepard (1956) based their theory of group behavior on Schutz' (1954-1955) earlier work. Their thesis is that groups must overcome authority, and intimacy or inclusion problems to be successful. Intimacy problems may lead the group to become overpersonal in the "group-think" mode, or to take "flight" psychologically or physically. Successful resolution of intimacy problems leads to pairing, understanding, acceptance, solidarity and consensual validation.

In Koestler's (1967) view all living systems are hierarchically ordered, and comprised of "holons." A holon may be part of a larger system or a whole system unto itself depending on one's perspective. Holons continually experience opposing tensions for integration into, and differentiation from the larger system. Koestler identifies such differentiation behaviors as ambition, competitiveness, aggressive-defensiveness, and a tendency toward action. He suggests that integration is

represented by empathy, projection, identification, worship, and quiescence.

Thus integration is represented in the literature by approach, interaction, closeness, pairing, solidarity, acceptance, empathy and identification. These activities and attitudes contribute to groupness and togetherness within the group. Differentiation is represented by withdrawal, detachment, flight, competitiveness, defensiveness and ambition. Differentiation suggests individualism and apartness. The next step in the study was to use the theoretical basis for integration and differentiation in concert with observation of group behavior to form the conceptual underpinnings for operational definitions of integration and differentiation. The resultant category system is discussed below.

Empirical Basis

Using the definitions of integration and differentiation derived from Schutz (1958), Bennis and Shepard (1956), and Koestler (1967), this investigator observed a self-analytic group for thirty hours and noted and described integration and differentiation behaviors. A rudimentary category system was formed, and streamlined after use. The category system consists of four dimensions or components

of integration and differentiation. Each dimension contains two or more mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories as shown in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here.

Dimension One: Subject

These dimensions were the result of a refining process which determined if the content of a message served to integrate or differentiate group members. An initial consideration in this process was to whom the speaker referred--self, group or others. It was originally thought that messages referring to "I" would differentiate the speaker from the group, while other referents, such as "we," would integrate. However, it was found that messages with self-referents could either differentiate the speaker from the group, for example, "I once studied for the priesthood," or integrate, for example, "I really like being in this group." Dimension One was created to distinguish among the various referents or subjects in messages. The dimension originally consisted of nine categories, such as I, you, he and we. After applying SID to group communication, it was found that the only discriminating subject categories are: I, We, Group members, Relationships among group members, and Other. But subject alone, while important, did not adequately distinguish between integrat-

ing and differentiating messages; more information was needed.

Dimension Two: Location

Additional information was gained by determining whether the focus of a message was upon events, persons or objects within the group (Internal) or outside of it (External). In the above examples the event, "studied for the priesthood," was external to the group, while "I really like being in this group," refers to behavior or feelings internal to the group. The second dimension categorizes the Locus of Message Content. External messages were always differentiating; internal messages, however, were not always integrating. The internal message: "I don't like any of you," differentiates rather than integrates the speaker with the group because of the negative affect.

Dimension Three: Affect

Affect was an additional significant factor in determining whether a message was differentiating or integrating. Therefore, Dimension Three: Affect was created. It was found that "I" messages signalling negative affect were differentiating if directed toward the group (Internal), for example: "I'm not happy here, and I'm getting out." Internal "I" messages signalling positive affect were integrating, for example, "I'm enjoying this conversation."

Internal messages with neutral affect, for example: "I'm going to take a turn," could be integrating, differentiating or neither, depending on how they were coded on other dimensions.

Dimension Four: Congruence

When a message's affect was neutral, it was necessary to look for the speaker's agreement or disagreement with the group to determine whether the message integrated, differentiated or neither. Dimension Four categorizes expressed Attitude Congruence as agreement, disagreement or neutral. For any subject, an internal message with neutral affect and agreement was integrating, for example: "That's a good idea; let's do it." An internal message--for any subject but "we,"--with neutral affect and disagreement was differentiating, for example: "It's never going to work if you do that." For all subjects but "we," an internal message with neutral affect and neutral agreement was neither integrating nor differentiating, for example: "My chair is broken." All internal messages with neutral affect and "we" as the subject were integrating regardless of attitude congruence, for example, "We aren't talking anymore." These operationalizations summarized in Table 2, are compatible with previous theoretical and empirical work.

Insert Table 2 about here.

Summary

In SID integrating messages are defined as those dealing with material internal to the group and having positive affect, or internal with neutral affect and agreement. The exceptions are "we" messages and messages concerning group members and/or relationships with group members. These messages are integrating as long as they are internal and not negative in affect.

Differentiating messages are of three types: 1) those concerned with material external to the group and showing positive, negative or neutral affect; 2) internal messages showing negative affect; and 3) internal messages with neutral affect and disagreement, with the exception of "we" messages.

Messages that are neither integrating nor differentiating are internal, with neutral affect and neutral agreement. Again the exceptions are "we" messages and messages concerning group members and/or relationships with group members.

An exploratory test of SID was conducted on a sample of tape recorded interaction from two self-analytic groups to determine if the system could yield useful information.

METHOD

Groups

Group members were undergraduate students at a large Eastern university who met in a course titled Interpersonal

and Small Group Communication. The students formed two groups of seven members each, which met for approximately four one-hour sessions. The purpose of the groups was to observe and analyze individual and group communication. Each group was led by the investigator in a non-directive style. All meetings for each group were recorded on audio tapes.³

Coding

The data base for each group consists of the four one-hour meetings. Two coders, trained in using SID, coded the first ten minutes of each meeting, skipped the second ten minutes, coded the third and so on to the end of the meeting.⁴ Four hundred messages were coded for Group I and 370 messages for Group II, a total of 770 messages or approximately sixty percent of each group's messages. This sampling method was chosen to retain as much data as possible for analysis, to ensure equal representation of each meeting, and to help prevent the omission of an important group occurrence from the data. Stech and Goldberg (1972) suggest that a minimum of 500 messages is necessary to minimize error variance.

Each message was categorized once for each of the four dimensions of SID, yielding four separate codes per message. A message is defined as a speech by one person until interrupted by another. This definition is consistent with the

one generally used in research on group communication (e.g., Ellis & Fisher, 1975), and in interaction research (e.g., Parks, Farace & Rogers, 1975; Parks, Farace, Rogers, Albrecht & Abbott, 1976; Rogers & Farace, 1975).

Reliability

Both coders coded approximately twenty-five percent of the same group's messages (154 messages) in order to estimate intercoder reliability. Guetzkow's (1950) "obtained agreement," an act by act estimation, was calculated. All estimates are within acceptable limits ranging from .80 to .96 over the four dimensions of SID. These reliability estimates suggest that the category system is relatively simple to use since the coders were not extensively trained. The reliability estimates are presented in Table 3.

Insert Table 3 about here

Validity

The data were first compared against prevailing theoretical and empirical models of small group behavior. Most models suggest that groups begin with an orientation stage in which members are reticent, distant and basically "getting a feel for the situation" (Bales & Strodtbeck, 1951; Bennis & Shepard, 1956; Ellis & Fisher, 1975; Fisher, 1970; Krueger, 1979; Schutz, 1958; Tuckman, 1965). Schutz (1958) theorized that all groups begin

with a period in which inclusion problems are the primary concern and cycle through stages of control and affection concerns. Bennis and Shepard (1956) maintain that the first phase of group life is characterized by flight behavior resulting from problems with authority relations. If these problems are resolved the group develops greater cohesion. Intimacy problems generate more flight behavior, and resolution again leads to unity. Tuckman's (1965) synthesis of studies of group development yields four basic phases: forming, storming, norming and performing. The first stage is characterized by orienting and information gathering. The group gradually develops more cohesion and interdependence over its life-span. Previous research and theory, though not in agreement on either a cyclical or linear model of development, nevertheless consistently suggests that groups begin with low levels of integration and build to higher levels. The final period of group life may be characterized by increased differentiation representative of "leave taking" behavior, however the literature on group development is not in accord on this issue.

Thus the two sample groups were expected to begin with low integration and high differentiation, and to move toward raising integration and lowering differentiation with a possible "spurt" of differentiation reflecting group termination. Differences in integration and differentiation behaviors were sought among the four group meetings.

Data Analysis

The data analysis consisted of two main steps. First, a homogeneity test was conducted to determine if both groups represented the same population, and could be collapsed for subsequent testing (Kullback, Kupperman & Ku, 1962). Homogeneity was computed separately for each dimension of SID.

Second, to determine when and how integration and differentiation behavior varied across the four group meetings, the stability or stationarity of the groups was tested (Anderson & Goodman, 1957). Each of the group meetings was compared with a composite of all group meetings for each dimension. From identification of the most frequently occurring categories during each group meeting, the levels of integration and differentiation were assessed, and the characteristics of the communication in each meeting were identified.

RESULTS

Homogeneity

The two groups were homogeneous on Dimensions One (Referent/Subject), Two (Locus of Message Content), and Three (Affect) of SID. They were nonhomogeneous on Dimension Four (Attitude Congruence), indicating discrepant patterns of Attitude Congruence in each group. Although agreement and disagreement messages were not high in either group, they were used differently by the groups. The groups were collapsed on the three homogeneous dimensions for further testing, and were treated separately

on Dimension Four. Results of the Homogeneity tests for each dimension are reported in Table 4.

Insert Table 4 about here.

Stationarity

With a few notable exceptions, the group's communication as represented by SID was stable across the four meetings. During all group meetings the primary subject/referent (Dimension One) was either "I" or "You." "We" messages were low initially, and reached their highest frequency in the final meeting, showing a significant difference ($p < .05$).

The most change over time occurred in the locus of message content (Dimension Two). The first meeting was significantly different ($p < .01$) from the other meetings on Dimension Two. External messages were at their peak during meeting one. In the second and third meetings messages were predominately internal as external messages declined. External messages reached their lowest point in the final meeting, a significant change ($p < .05$).

The affect (Dimension Three) was consistently neutral throughout the group meetings. Agreement (Dimension Four) was primarily neutral in both groups. Groups were examined separately on this nonhomogeneous dimension and Group I was found to have higher overall agreement than Group II.

By looking at the most frequent categories in each dimension of SID, the levels of integration and differentiation

in the group's communication was determined.

DISCUSSION

As expected, differentiation was higher during initial meetings of both groups than during later meetings. The groups relied heavily on differentiating (external-neutral-I and you) messages in the first meeting in which members exchanged demographic and historical information. Of the groups' messages most were differentiating, and only a small portion were integrating or neither. This communication behavior is typical of new groups (see, e.g., Bales & Strodtbeck, 1951; Ellis & Fisher, 1975; Fisher, 1970; Schutz, 1958, Tuckman, 1965), and seem to reflect group members' efforts to initially maintain the boundary between self and group. This effort continues at least until orientation proceeds and the group gathers sufficient information to reduce uncertainty and promote the development of cohesion. Farrell (1976), for example, found the greatest percentage of acts in which members assert their right to remain separate from the group occurred during the first "phase" of group development.

The second, third and fourth meetings were not dominated by either integrating or differentiating messages. Messages in these meetings were primarily internal-neutral-I and you, however, the groups showed a statistically significant ($p < .05$) increase in "we" messages in the final

meeting when compared with a composite of all meetings, and showed a decline in External messages ($p < .05$) in this meeting. The focus of the groups was shifting to the group, and away from extraneous or individual concerns. Increased differentiation did not occur at termination, probably because the groups did not have sufficient time to develop high cohesion, rather the final meeting reflected the beginning of the development of integration. We know little, though, of the process of that development--whether it's linear and progressive or cyclical, or what type of curve it represents. SID is capable of yielding this information when applied to a more extensive protocol than used in this study. It is expected that group boundaries will be fluid and continually reestablished over time.

An especially relevant context for the future examination of boundary setting behavior is the family. The influence of this behavior on the family relationships has frequently been mentioned in marriage and family literature, but has not been formally studied. By using SID one can identify the level of integration and differentiation in the family system, or whether one partner's mode of behavior is integrating or differentiating and what his/her partner's response is. We might thus identify "abnormal" frequencies of integration or differentiation in the relationship or in the behavior of either partner. For example, if a husband is exhibiting increasing integration behavior, while the

wife is showing increasing autonomy behavior; there is potential for trouble unless the interactants become aware of the situation and deal with it. Parents' differentiation from children may signal problems also, while a child's differentiation if understood by parents may signal a normal stage of development. SID may be a useful tool in the study of family inclusion behavior.

Another important context for the application of SID is the study of death and dying. SID may be useful in explicating the process of psychologically "letting go" of terminally ill or deceased loved ones. This is a difficult and complex process; one we know little about. SID may identify the situation where premature differentiation from the ill occurs, or differentiation from the dead fails to occur.

In addition to suggestions for further application of SID, this study raises an important question about analysis of categorized behavior. Should the strength or intensity of a category of behavior be assessed by comparing its frequency with the frequencies of other categories in a dimension, or in comparison to its own frequencies during different time periods in the groups' life-span? It is possible that "neutral" behaviors, for example, always dominate and form a matrix within which agreement-disagreement or positive-negative affect, for example, fluctuate. The influence of agreement is obscured by the high frequency

of neutral messages. Resolution of this issue requires the accumulation of a corpus of descriptions of communication under a variety of circumstances such as intense conflict, award/reward giving, and normal conversation. Determining the "normal" incidence of different types of communication behaviors will provide a base line for gauging the relative intensity of such behaviors.

NOTES

1. The author wishes to thank Martin Smith, Bruce Barnett and Ralph Villecca for their assistance.
2. Bale's (1950) Interaction Process Analysis system is an example of a very general category scheme. Bales operationalizes solidarity, a concept similar to inclusion, in terms of the following general behaviors: "Shows solidarity, raises other's status, gives help, reward." Much interpretation is left to the observer/coder in discerning solidarity. The Bales System in fact requires extensive coder training. Such general operational definitions are exercises in renaming concepts rather than translating into observable behaviors.
3. The groups were originally conducted and taped for instructional purposes. This investigation was conceived after the course had terminated.
4. Coders were unaware of the exact nature of the study.

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Table 1

System for Coding Integration and
Differentiation Messages (SID)

Dimension One: Referent/Subject

Categorizes the primary referent apparent in the words of the message.

1. I
2. We
3. Group Members
4. Relationships Among Group Members
5. Other

Dimension Two: Locus of Message Content

Categorizes message content concerning the group as a unit, members of the group, or a group attribute, e.g., group climate; versus message content external to the group, e.g., past experience, environment.

1. Internal
2. External

Dimension Three: Affect

Categorizes the emotion or feeling apparent in the words of the message.

1. Positive (e.g., I like you.)
2. Negative (e.g., You're a bore.)
3. Neutral (e.g., Would you repeat that?)

Dimension Four: Attitude Congruence

Categorizes shared or unshared positions, opinions, etc.

1. Agreement (e.g., You're right.)
2. Disagreement (e.g., I don't think that's it.)
3. Neutral (e.g., Let's take a break.)

Table 2

Operationalization of Integration and Differentiation

^a Categories are combined in columns.

<u>SID</u> <u>Dimension</u>	<u>Integrating Category Combinations^a</u>		
1.	All categories	Cats. 2,3,4	All categories
2	Internal (Cat. 1)	Internal (Cat. 1)	Internal (Cat. 1)
3.	Positive Affect (Cat. 1)	Positive or Neutral Affect	Neutral Affect
4	All categories	All categories	Agreement (Cat. 1)

Differentiating Category Combinations

1	All categories	All categories	Cats. 1,5
2	External (Cat. 2)	Internal (Cat. 1)	Internal (Cat. 1)
3	All categories	Negative Affect (Cat. 2)	Neutral Affect (Cat. 3)
4	All categories	All categories	Disagreement (Cat. 2)

Neither Integrating or Differentiating

1	Cats. 1,5
2	Internal (Cat. 1)
3	Neutral Affect (Cat. 3)
4	Neutral Agreement (Cat. 3)

Table 3

Intercoder Reliability Estimates for SID

Note.--Based on Guetzkow's (1950) Obtained Agreement estimate.

<u>Dimension of SID</u>	<u>Reliability Estimate</u>
One: Referent	.80
Two: Locus of Message Content	.83
Three: Affect	.96
Four: Attitude Congruence	.85

Table 4

Results of Homogeneity Test

* Statistically significant ($p < .01$).

<u>Dimension of SID</u>	<u>DF</u>	<u>χ^2</u>
One: Reference	56	71.19
Two: Locus of Message Content	2	8.71
Three: Affect	6	12.95
Four: Attitude Congruence	6	47.67*